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AMERICAN INDIAN STORIES

NEVER TOLD BEFORE

BY
LEONARD LIVINGSTON LEGTERS

INTRODUCTION

 HESE narratives by Mr. Legters need no editing, no polishing, no re-enforcing. Some stories are very convincing, some move the emotions, and others stir the conscience, leading to the performance of duty. The tales here told do all of this.

The Indian Mission of America, from whose scouting in the Indian country Mr. Legters has just returned, exists only to bring the Gospel to the neglected millions of the native American race who are in pagan darkness. We co-operate with the Pioneer Mission Agency, the Inland South America Missionary Union, and all denominational boards whose great aim is the proclaiming of the Gospel.

One who loves the Lord and longs that "this Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come," and who prays, "even so come, Lord Jesus," has provided for the publication of this leaflet. When you have read it, send us the addresses of friends to whom you would like to have copies mailed.

Face to face with the need and the opportunity among the unevangelized Indians of the Americas and Mexico, these living narratives are published to lead to interest and co-operation in carrying forward this work.

THOMAS CLINTON MOFFETT, *Secretary*,

80-82 Stafford Building,

Philadelphia, Pa.

CENTRAL AMERICAN AND MEXICAN INDIANS WHO LEARNED AND SPREAD THE MESSAGE

BY LEONARD LIVINGSTON LEGTERS

Field Representative of the Indian Mission of America

THERE was an ignorant Mam Indian in Mexico who went into Guatemala on business and there he heard a man tell about Jesus, the Redeemer of Men. This Indian went to the man who was speaking and said, "Senor, where can I hear more about this Saviour?" The man sat down and told him more about Jesus and he took this Jesus for his Saviour, and he bought the Book from which this story had been given him. The old Indian could not read, but he had a nephew, twelve years of age, who had gone to school and could read a bit of Spanish. He took this nephew and said, "My son, come here." The old man sat down and the boy read to him. It was astounding. He took the boy by the hand and went to a neighbor and again the story was read. They sat discussing it and said, "This is the most wonderful thing we have ever heard." Whenever the old man had a little time he had the boy read to him, and the old man would go to another neighbor and they would sit down while the boy read to them the story. The old man hardly had time to work. This book contained such a marvelous story, and the things that he heard were such glorious things that he kept going, day after day, to the neighbors that they might share with him the wonders he had found.

Nine years after this I happened in the town. I was the first missionary that had ever been there. I found here over 350 believers who had never seen a missionary. They had built their own church building. Three times they had torn out the end because the building was too small. I shall not soon forget the first time that I spoke. I had heard about that group of Indians, and I wanted to go there, but of course you cannot go where you are not invited, especially with Indians. One night we were preaching in another place, nine miles distant. That night I saw some Indians in the congregation, but this was nothing unusual. Early the next morning there was a knock at our door. Three men stood there and said, "We have heard you desire to come and visit our people. Last night we came to hear you preach. What you said was all right, and if you preach like that we invite you to come and preach to our people." Men carried our bags. We had John Mark, the mule, carrying our Testaments and Bibles and tracts. When we arrived at the edge of the village three hundred people came to meet us, and we had the usual time of embracing and greeting. Then they led us back to the town. They took care of our mule and unpacked him; gave us a place where we could wash, then they took us to the chapel for a prayer meeting, and we sat down and ate.

After the supper we went to the meeting. When I got through preaching I said, "Is there anyone here who would like to accept Jesus as his Saviour?" One man raised his hand. The leader arose and said, "You did that two weeks ago. You cannot receive Him twice." But there were eight that evening who did receive Jesus, and the Indian by my side said that everybody else in the building was a believer. Then I told those eight in a very special way the plan of salvation. We remained in the chapel singing and teaching them until after twelve o'clock. They asked us to stay there for another day, but we said there were other places to which we must go. We went to the room they had provided for us and slept. Early the next morning the Indians came to buy some of the Testaments and Bibles that we had with us. You know the Indians are very courteous, so they came one at a time and when one man had finished his purchase the next one would begin, so it took a long time. It was between ten and eleven o'clock before they had all bought what they wanted. When we were ready we packed our bags and as I was about to put the boxes on the mule, one of the Indians came and took the boxes out of my hand and said, "No, no, that little mule cannot carry that today. This little one brought us these Gospels and we are going to carry them on our own backs and let the mule go free today."

That was the finest thanksgiving I ever saw in my life,—a man carrying a mule's load. I said in my own heart, "God, I wish I were able to show gratitude to you like that." When we got to the river they wanted us to return with them, but we said, "No, we cannot; we must go on." They said, "Won't you pray?" so Mr. Burgess prayed. After we had gone a bit farther they said, "Will you not go back with us?" We said, "No, we cannot." They said, "Then let us have another prayer" and so we prayed. They said again, "Won't you go back with us?" We said, "No, we must go on." Then they said, "Well, let's sing." We were standing by the bank of the Rio Blanco (white river) and one of the Indians, in a quavering voice, raised the tune, "Shall we gather at the river, the beautiful, beautiful river." It was the last time I saw all those Indians. The next time we will meet at the river that flows by the throne of God.

This year when I was in Mexico I met one of these men and he told me that their membership today was more than 375, and that there are twenty-five organizations which have sprung up through this one congregation, and through the efforts of this one man. It is the biggest thing in all Mexico, and perhaps the second largest Protestant organization in Latin America. I know of but one larger and that is in Rio de Janeiro, where there is one congregation of 1500 members, but this organization is larger than any other Protestant organization in Mexico. All done through one Indian whose heart Jesus captured. But he said in his heart, "O God, my people must know this story." He kept Jesus by giving Him to some one else. Would you also keep Jesus? Then go and give Him to some one else.

MARCELINO

Another Indian, Marcelino. He was more than forty years old when he became a Christian. He was unable to read the Bible, because he was quite old and could not see very well, but how he delighted to hear the Word of God. I had in my pocket an extra pair of glasses which I was not using very much. I said, "Try these." When he tried on the glasses he said, "Ah, Senor, sell them to me. They are so soft and gentle to my eyes." When this man, Marcelino, was younger he was in the Guatemalan army. An old Indian had been arrested because his neighbors said that when Mr. Burgess, the Presbyterian Missionary, visited this old Indian he killed the neighbors' chickens and fed them to Mr. Burgess. He was in prison for some three weeks and Marcelino, the younger Indian, was made his guard. Marcelino was very devout and clung to his own religion very tenaciously, but the old man began to talk to him about his wonderful Saviour, Jesus. Marcelino put his fingers in his ears so he could not hear, but, being a guard, he could not leave his prisoner. Marcelino became interested. Once this old man was out of prison he sent word to Mr. Burgess that the Indian, Marcelino, was interested and asked Mr. Burgess to go to see him. Mr. Burgess made arrangements to visit the younger man. He met Mr. Burgess outside of his village and took him to his house by a round-about way so that no one else would see that the foreign missionary was with him.

After the first visit the Indian said, "I wish that you would come again," and Mr. Burgess went again, and then a third time. As Mr. Burgess was talking to Marcelino and his two wives, he quoted the text Matthew 10:32—"Whosoever, therefore, shall confess me before me before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven." Marcelino said, "I believe in Him but I cannot go and tell others. They would drive me out of the town." Mr. Burgess went home. One week after that he heard a sharp knock at his door. When he went to open it there stood Marcelino, who had come thirty-six miles. His first greeting was, "I have done it, I have done it." Mr. Burgess said, "Done what?" The Indian's face fell. He said, "Ah, Senor, I have done it, I have done it." He thought Mr. Burgess would be thinking of the same thing of which he had been thinking all the past week, and again he said, "I have done it." After Mr. Burgess invited him into the house the Indian said, "I have confessed Jesus to men," and he told the story. He said, "You know I belong to the City Council." (The towns where Indians live are governed by the Indians themselves; they elect their own mayors and aldermen.) Marcelino went on to say that one day as he was sitting with the other counsellors a soldier

came in and began to talk about Christians, saying they are the most sensuous and voluptuous people in the world. They celebrate the Lord's Supper, at which time they have the worst drunken orgies. They take out the eyes of children, making a stew and giving it to other Indians to drink, thus making new believers, that they may bewitch them. The soldier told some of the vilest things imaginable that were done in these Protestant gatherings. Marcelino said, "I stood there and heard him tell these vile things, and I said 'It is a lie. These Christians do not do these things'." The man turned and said, "How do you know; are you one of them?" And Marcelino said, "Thank God I am." He said "When I said I was one of them, my soul overflowed with the greatest joy I have known in my life, and then and there I told them the story of this marvelous Saviour who had come down to this world, who had died, and who could save men from their sins; I told them how I myself had come to know this Saviour and how He filled my life with peace and joy." The first time I was there I saw Marcelino. He had been a Christian six years. Seven years after that I was there and went over this same field where Marcelino lived. Today there are more than fifty organized churches among the Indians and principally through the work of one man, Marcelino. Jesus caught the imagination of Marcelino. He filled his heart with joy. Marcelino said, "My people have no comfort, have no peace, have no joy. I will tell them of my Saviour." When Marcelino was past forty years he began to learn Spanish and to read it—a task which some missionaries find a great difficulty in doing.

ANSELMO

Let me tell you the story of Anselmo. I shall not forget this Indian—most of his lower teeth gone, a weak old man. I can see him walking along. In his right hand he carried a little Deitz lantern. In one pocket of his coat a bottle of oil, and in a little sack his Bible and Testament. I said, "Anselmo, why do you carry that lantern?" He said to me, "I am getting old; I cannot sleep well at night, and when I awaken I light my lantern and I can read my Bible and sing praises to my Saviour."

On one of my trips to Guatemala, Mr. Burgess asked me whether I would give a few Indian men special lessons in soul winning. The Indians do not sit side by side as we do, but one behind the other, according to rank—the chief first and the lesser man back of him. Anselmo was sitting fourth seat back. While speaking I turned to the old man and said, "Tell me, Anselmo, how many have you led to Jesus this year (this was about the twelfth of February)?" The old man's face fell. He said, "Ah, Senor, very few." I said, "Tell me, how many have you led to Jesus this year?" He said, "There are not more than thirty." Early in July of that year I received a letter from the old man and it contained a list of 144 whom he had led to Jesus before the first of July. That would be a life work for most Christians in

America, and you know that there are many unsaved in the United States as well as down there. After the meeting Anselmo asked me to go with him to a place where he had been working among the Mam Indians. He had a group of young folks he had been teaching and they had never had an opportunity to make confession of their faith to anyone who it seemed to them had authority.

The old man had them come to us individually, and while standing before us they made their profession of faith and they said, after telling the things that they believed, "I have received Jesus Christ as my personal Saviour." Anselmo was a wonderful Indian—never taught in his life, but he knew that Jesus had come in and that it was a matter of having received a person who saved him. Then I went back farther into the low lands, and there we met another group of Indians. He said to us that the youngest one was not more than two weeks old and the oldest one not more than two years old. They had made a clearing and there had laid logs upon which they sat. There was a new moon in the sky. I counted the Indians as they came through the shadows of the banana trees and the coffee trees and found 153. There they stood. I began to preach to them. I told them what I could of the marvelous Saviour.

At the end of the talk it came to me that those Indians were a small group of a tribe of 200,000 and that this old Indian was the only witness among them. I said to them, "The Lord commanded, 'Go into all the world and carry the Gospel'. There are 200,000 of your people. Will you go?" Then I said, "Some of you could not go because you are slaves. Some of you are old men and you could not go. Some of you are mothers with your children and you could not go. But there are some of your young men who are strong. You can get your freedom. You can earn money. You can go." And I asked each man and woman there who would say, "God, I give myself to you to carry the message to my people," to stand, and those who could not go far out, if they were willing, that they should stand and say, "I will take the Gospel to the people who are on this plantation," and then I sat down. After a short time one young man arose and said, "I give myself," and another, "I give myself," and another until all but three were standing, and these were mothers who had babes in their arms. When I passed by the same place the other day on this trip, I said to Mr. Burgess, "What was the result of that meeting, do you know?" He said, "Some of those young men that took their stand that night are our finest evangelists and they are still carrying the Gospel to their own people. Jesus satisfied them and they went out giving Him to others.

BRIGIDO

On the first visit, for one meeting, Rev. Howard B. Dinwiddie and I were together with a group of Indians in Central America. About seventy had come together from various parts of Guatemala to have a conference. It was on a Friday

night just before Christmas. At the close of the meeting I asked them, "How many of you will put yourselves in the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ, you who know Him, and will say, 'God, I go to carry the Gospel to my people'." Sixty of these seventy stood and said, "I give myself." There were sixteen of the young men whom we could send out two by two. Some said, "We can give two days," some said, "five days" and the longest was thirty. They were furnished with money so that they could live on the journey, but they were not paid for the work, but only enough for their food.

Among them was one boy of sixteen Brigido. With him a man of about thirty was sent. They went to a distant village. Three months afterwards I passed through this same town where these two men had preached and there I found three families and ten believers who had accepted the Lord Jesus when these two workers visited them. These Indians walked nine miles each Sunday to another village where there were believers that they might pray and worship together, in all walking eighteen miles each Sunday to have somebody to pray with.

In a letter received from the sixteen year old boy he said, "While I live I will never forget that day when I presented my body to the Lord Jesus, and my purpose is to live and carry the Gospel of our blessed Saviour, that marvelous Saviour, to the Indian people." He is the one, the same Saviour. He captures the imagination and the hearts of men and He is saying to everyone of us, "Give Me a chance to show my love through you."

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The neglected Indian populations to the south of us in this Western hemisphere, the millions of the native American race in Mexico, Central and South America constitute the largest body of unevangelized and untaught people, in proportion to their total number, of any element of earth's inhabitants.

Who will agitate and plead in behalf of the down-trodden, enslaved and pagan Indians in these countries, until their rights and liberties shall be secured, and the Christian faith be proclaimed to these descendants of the Aztecs, Toltecs, Incas, Mayas and other divisions of the Redmen?

Who will pray and labor for the enlisting of volunteer workers to offer their services in this cause, and for the consecrated gifts of stewards of God's treasure, to the financial support of the work?

INDIAN MISSION OF AMERICA

80-82 STAFFORD BUILDING

1114 CHESTNUT STREET PHILADELPHIA, PA.